

issues—Republicans disagreeing with Democrats, conservatives disagreeing with progressives, surely, we can come together and take action that a significant majority of Americans want. So I am hopeful this critical legislation will receive a vote on the Senate floor very soon.

Thank you.

I yield back my time.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

FUNDING THE GOVERNMENT

Mrs. SHAHEEN. Mr. President, the Senate and the House right now are struggling to pass yet another short-term continuing resolution to avoid a Federal shutdown at midnight on Friday. For nine consecutive years now, since I have gotten to the Senate, we have begun the fiscal year without regular appropriations bills being enacted into law. If we pass another continuing resolution this week, it will be the fourth continuing resolution for fiscal year 2018. There were three CRs, or continuing resolutions, for fiscal year 2017. This “government by CR” is chaotic and it is disruptive. It is inflicting real damage on our Armed Forces, as well as on critical domestic programs that benefit people across this country.

I live in a very small town in New Hampshire called Madbury, and if our board of selectmen in Madbury committed this kind of budgetary malpractice, we would get rid of them.

The fact is that the frantic scramble to pass a new CR by midnight on Friday is yet another manufactured crisis here in Washington. It is a crisis that is completely unnecessary. The Appropriations Committees in both Houses of Congress have completed their work in a thoughtful, timely manner. In this Congress, the House passed all 12 of its appropriations bills out of committee. In the Senate, the Appropriations Committee passed 8 of our 12 bills, and we did that with overwhelming bipartisan support. The only reason we didn't report the other four bills out of committee is because the leadership directed us to stop.

So let's be very clear. This is not about appropriators not being able to get our work done and not being able to agree on what we want to do. This is about the leadership in Congress—the Republican majority—which has refused to allow us to go forward with a regular order budget process. The House, the Senate, and the White House are all controlled by Republicans, and if they wanted to complete the appropriations process in a timely manner, we could have done so, and we could have done it with bipartisan support.

Now, I am especially concerned about the damage that government by CR is inflicting on our Armed Forces and national security. Those of us who serve on the Armed Services Committee were disturbed by testimony from the Chief of Naval Operations, ADM John Richardson, in September of 2016. He said: “Our ability to achieve true effectiveness and efficiency has been undermined by budget instability, workforce limitations, and eight—now likely nine”—and it was nine—“straight years of budget uncertainty and continuing resolutions.”

I remember when Admiral Richardson came and spoke to the Navy caucus, and we were asking him what his concerns were. He said: Well, you know, my biggest concern is budget certainty, and what we tell everybody in the Navy now to figure on is to figure that they can't do anything in the first quarter of a fiscal year because they are going to be operating under a continuing resolution.

He pointed out: “This compromises our mission, and drives inefficiency and waste into all that we do.”

In a similar vein, the Army Chief of Staff, GEN Mark Milley, has repeatedly warned us of the damaging impacts that budget uncertainty has on the Army's combat readiness. Training cycles are disrupted, and sometimes they are discontinued. All non-mission-critical maintenance is postponed for the length of a CR.

Now, I share the views of many in this Congress that we need to increase support for our military. We live in an uncertain world, where we are facing security threats from ISIS to Russia and North Korea, and we could go down a long list. We must be prepared to respond, but we can't increase military spending at the expense of funding our domestic needs.

When it comes to funding domestic needs, no challenge is more urgent and frightening than the nationwide opioid epidemic. In my State of New Hampshire, nearly everyone has a heart-breaking story of a family member, a friend, or a colleague whose life has been destroyed by opioids. We can just look at these headlines and see what the challenge is. This is on August 16, 2017, from our State newspaper, the Concord Monitor, in the capital: “N.H. drug overdose deaths—mostly from fentanyl—continue at a high rate.”

The CDC recently said that New Hampshire has the highest overdose death rate from fentanyl, the third highest in the country. Nationwide, in 2016, more than 63,000 Americans died from overdoses—more than 63,000 people. If we were losing that many Americans to a disease outbreak, to a war in the Middle East or elsewhere, there would be an outcry in Congress and we would pass legislation to address the crisis in a matter of days. Well, this current funding crisis is an opportunity for us to address the opioid epidemic.

In recent weeks, along with my colleague from New Hampshire, Senator

HASSAN, I have urged the Senate to make an immediate emergency \$25 billion Federal investment in treatment and prevention—a down payment on a sustained, reliable funding stream to support efforts by States and communities. At long last, we could provide a response that is commensurate with the magnitude of this public health crisis.

There is bipartisan support in this body and throughout Congress to address the opioid epidemic. President Trump promised when he was campaigning, and since he became President, that he was going to work to end this epidemic. Yet we are still waiting to see the resources that States and communities need.

Now, last week many of us watched with great anticipation when President Trump invited bipartisan representatives from both the House and Senate, and the television cameras, to talk about how we were going to address the funding situation that we are in, and how we were going to address DACA—those young people who were brought to this country through no fault of their own and are now in a situation where they don't have citizenship and they don't have a way forward.

Senators GRAHAM and DURBIN spent four months negotiating an excellent, bipartisan agreement to strengthen border security and to give Dreamers the path to citizenship that they deserve. The President, in that meeting that we all watched said: Bring me a solution, and I will sign it.

Well, they reached an agreement that would likely pass in the Senate with at least 60 votes. Last week, President Trump applauded the deal. He invited Senators GRAHAM and DURBIN to the White House to finalize it. And when they got there, they were shocked to find that the President had completely reversed himself.

This morning, Senator GRAHAM was stating the obvious when he said: “We do not have a reliable partner in the White House.”

Well, we do have reliable partners in this body. Give us that bill. Let us vote on it. Let's send it to the President, and let the President veto it if he doesn't like it.

Yesterday, Majority Leader MCCONNELL said: “As soon as the President figures out what he is for, then I will be convinced that we are not just spinning our wheels but actually dealing with a bill that can become law.”

Well, again, we have a bipartisan deal on DACA. Let's vote on it.

There are very real consequences to the constant chaos, turmoil, and policy reversals that have become the new normal under this President. We must commit ourselves on a bipartisan basis to restoring order to the appropriations process. It is time to fulfill our constitutional responsibility to pass full-year appropriations bills that address the needs of the American people.

As we work to resolve this current fiscal impasse, any agreement should include a number of basic provisions.

We should fund government for the remainder of this year—no more short-term continuing resolutions—enough. It is enough. We need to stop that. The majority of Members in this Chamber and throughout Congress understand that we can't keep doing this. Any deal should increase support for our military, and it should provide parity for our domestic needs: to address the opioid epidemic; for our veterans; for the Children's Health Insurance Program and community health centers; for those Medicaid payments that are so critical to our rural hospitals; for disaster relief in Florida, Texas, California, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands; and for pension relief for people who have worked their whole lives and who are facing old age without the pensions they paid into.

We can get this done. There are enough people of goodwill on both sides of the aisle in this body and in the other body so that we can do this if we are allowed to work together. So Democrats and Republicans, let's get this done. Let's keep the government funded, and let's show the American people that we can work together in the interests of this country.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Iowa.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM

Mr. GRASSLEY. I thank the Presiding Officer.

Should the Children's Health Insurance Program be reauthorized? Of course it should be reauthorized. It has a long history of strong bipartisan support. This is a major issue in reaching the point of whether we need to get something passed—and we do need to get something passed so the government doesn't shut down. In regard to the Children's Health Insurance Program being a part of that, this started very early last fall, when the Senate Finance Committee overwhelmingly passed a 5-year extension from that committee, once again stating the strong bipartisan support that the Children's Health Insurance Program has.

Thankfully, it is moving along in the House of Representatives. That body has included a 6-year extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program in the continuing resolution that we have to get through the U.S. Senate. That 6-year extension would be the longest extension of the program since it was created over 20 years ago.

I am sure this is going to be surprising to our constituents, for sure, and maybe even surprising to Members of this body, but this reauthorization of 6 years actually saves \$1 billion.

I cannot believe that we are in a situation where people who have said that they support the Children's Health Insurance Program would vote against its reauthorization when the House res-

olution comes over here, but that is what the leadership of this body is dealing with. The reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program has been elevated in this debate, so people know that those who have been crying for a long period of time about finally having CHIP reauthorized could be in a situation of voting against what they have been pleading for over a long period of time.

My colleague from the Senate Judiciary Committee, Senator FEINSTEIN, said: "Healthcare coverage for kids should be a no-brainer." I agree. This Children's Health Insurance Program reauthorization is a no-brainer, both in the value it has for the kids and in saving us money at this point.

Senators WARNER and Kaine from Virginia wrote: "We ask that you include bipartisan legislation reauthorizing the Children's Health Insurance Program in any upcoming funding legislation." Well, it is here for all of those Senators who want the Children's Health Insurance Program reauthorized. This is the opportunity to reauthorize it.

Will you vote against what you have been advocating for a long time—the reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program? In my State of Iowa, 68,792 children—the latest enrollment—are in CHIP and are depending upon Congress to do the right thing. The right thing to do is to reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program as soon as possible—which could be today or tomorrow—for 6 years so that we don't have to deal with it for a long period of time.

My fellow Senators, this is a time for statesmanship, not gamesmanship. It is time to vote for a prompt reauthorization of the Children's Health Insurance Program.

TAX REFORM

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I would like to speak about a tax issue. It was nearly 3 weeks ago that the President signed into law the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. It is the most sweeping reform of our Tax Code in more than three decades. This tax reform provides both tax simplification and tax cuts for the vast majority of taxpayers.

Importantly, the tax reform bill made good on its commitment to provide real relief to small business owners, and that also includes family farmers and ranchers. As one of only three Republican Senators on both the Finance Committee and the Agriculture Committee, it was a priority of mine to represent agriculture and the family farm institution throughout the tax reform debate.

Fair treatment for farmers under tax reform was especially important to me, given the large role agriculture plays in the economy of the State of Iowa. Ag accounts for one out of every five jobs in the State and makes up 33 percent of Iowa's economy. The tax reform bill provided a once-in-a-generation op-

portunity to make real and long-lasting reforms for farmers, ranchers, and every American working in our agricultural industry.

Broadly speaking, across the board, rate reductions will let Americans keep more of their own money. This will afford farmers the opportunity to reinvest in their operations instead of sending that financial capital to politicians in Washington.

Tax reform legislation expands section 179 of the Tax Code, which helps farmers finance overhead costs. It enables farmers to deduct more expenses in the year they occurred and also expands the availability of cash accounting to more farmers in Iowa and throughout the country. These provisions will allow farmers to invest in the equipment necessary to do the job of feeding the Nation and the world.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act lowers taxes on capital investment and includes a business income deduction, which will help level the playing field between farms that file as corporations and those that file as individuals. More than 94 percent of farms are taxed under the IRS provisions affecting individual taxpayers. The bulk of agriculture producers who operate outside the corporate tax code deserve basic fairness. The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act makes sure that those taxed under the individual and corporate tax codes are treated with more equity.

One of the most frequently discussed issues in tax reform discussion is the estate tax, which can force family farms to break up operations to pay the IRS following the death of family members. That doesn't happen at the death of a lot of farmers, but in a few cases it does, and it seems to me to be very unfair to break up a farming operation to pay as a result of the consequence of death. I support a full repeal of this unfair tax, but was pleased that in this tax reform legislation we were able to make significant progress in alleviating its burden on family farmers by doubling the estate tax exemption. This substantial change would let more family farmers pass their hard-earned life's work on to their children, paving the way for the next generation of family farmers.

According to the Iowa Farm Bureau, given the price of farmland, about 30 percent of crop farms in Iowa exceeded the \$5 million estate tax exemption in 2016, based on land values. The doubling of the exemption amount will go a long way toward alleviating the nightmare that is the death tax for many Iowa farmers.

I have long advocated for common-sense tax relief measures because they will help Iowa and the Midwest and will make life easier for middle-class Americans.

Farmers' hard work provides the healthy and affordable food that we so often take for granted. We should do everything in our power to support that segment of our economy and create an environment where these small